REMARKS

Applicants reply to the Office Action dated October 20, 2008, within the shortened statutory three-month period for reply. Claims 1-14 were pending in the application and the Examiner rejects claims 1-14. Support for the amendments may be found in the originally-filed specification, claims, and figures. No new matter has been introduced by the amendments. Reconsideration of this application is respectfully requested.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 101

The Examiner rejects claims 11 and 12 under 35 U.S.C. § 101 as being directed toward non-statutory subject matter. The Examiner asserts that, despite Applicants' previous amendments, the "claims continue to reflect only intangible limitations" (item 8). Applicants amend claims 11 and 12 in accordance with the suggestions of the Examiner in order to recite tangible elements relating to a computer system processor.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 112

The Examiner rejects claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention. Specifically, the Examiner asserts that the limitations, "determining if the request..." and "if the request includes the natural query language" are not positively recited and do not present an alternative "if not" scenario. Applicants amend claim 1 to more precisely state that the following steps are being performed "in response to" a particular event.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103

The Examiner rejects claims 1-3, 6-8, and 11-12 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Shoolery et al., U.S. Patent No. 5,570,283, ("Shoolery") in view of Buchanan, U.S. Patent No. 6,009,408. Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Shoolery generally discloses a system for aggregating travel transaction data from Customer Reservations System (CRS) systems in order to provide corporate leaders with a more rapid insight into travel expenses for an organization. As disclosed in the Background of Shoolery, CRS systems do not maintain travel information for more than 24 hours due to the fact that current CRS systems are old and lack the memory and processing power to maintain such information for longer periods of time. As such, Shoolery correctly notes that "information about travelers' itineraries virtually disappears until post travel credit card invoices are

processed" (column 2, lines 46-48). Shoolery goes on to state that this can take as long as three months, therefore, managers are at a disadvantage in timely identifying out-of-policy travel that employees may have made.

As such, Shoolery seeks to overcome the disadvantages of prior art travel reporting by connecting to various CRS systems on a regular basis and downloading travel information, including travel cost data, relating to their employees. The Shoolery system is able to process this information to produce an expense report that can be electronically routed to the traveling employee. The employee can then add other expenses such as, for example, taxi fares, dining expenses, entertainment expenses, etc. The expense report is then routed to the appropriate manager for review and approval. Once approved, Shoolery discloses that the expense report can be used to reconcile receipts, ATM withdrawals, per diem, etc.

Buchanan generally discloses a system for processing travel related expenses. Specifically, the Buchanan system includes a database that stores a traveler profile, a customer profile, and a traveler category rule set in order to provide automated services for travel expense reporting and for processing of travel expenses. The Buchanan system uses the traveler profile in order to allocate funds for travel expenses. For example, a profile may correspond to a high-level executive of a large corporation. When the executive makes travel arrangements, the Buchanan system performs an analysis of the executive's profile, determines that first-class airfare is required and determines that client entertainment expenses can be expected to average $280 per day of travel. Therefore, the Buchanan system is limited to calculating the overall expenses relating to the travel and allocates funds to the Executive based on the calculation.

Moreover, Buchanan receives electronic representations of receipts directly from service providers; therefore, there is no need for the traveler to maintain hard copy receipts during business related travel. However, Buchanan only discloses that these receipts are "images", and does not further disclose how the receipts are automatically processes. **In other words, Buchanan does not disclose or contemplate a procedure for automatically identifying the service providers, accessing their database systems, and retrieving the receipts.**

Neither Shoolery nor Buchanan are concerned with the specific problem of providing highly scalable, conditioned and inter-related transactional data from multiple, disparate data sources including BOTH travel cost data from travel sources AND financial charge data from financial account sources. Moreover, neither Shoolery nor Buchanan

disclose how data may be obtained from multiple disparate sources based on a single natural language query.

While known systems, including the cited references, may allow for the construction and processing of natural language queries, such systems only process parameters defined within the natural language query in order create a single query to be executed against a single database. And, while such a query may be operative to retrieve data from multiple tables within the single database, the process lacks the ability to construct multiple queries that may be executed against multiple and disparate database systems based on metadata that is directly associated with parameters within a single natural language query. This is contrary to the presently claimed invention, which takes into consideration that elements of a natural language query may relate to multiple and disparate servers and database systems. Therefore, the present invention equips each query element with a set of instructions (i.e., metadata), which instruct the system as to where to access the requested data, as well as specific protocols that may be required in order to access the data. Neither of the cited references disclose a system capable of parsing a single natural language query in order to seamlessly access data within any number of servers and database systems. As such, neither Shoolery, Buchanan, nor any combination thereof, disclose or contemplate the following combination of unique steps as similarly recited by independent claims 1, 6, 11, and 12:

- parsing the request to retrieve the data selection criteria from a natural language query in response to the request including the natural language query, wherein the data selection criteria includes metadata comprising instructions for where to access travel transaction data and financial account data and how to access the travel transaction data and the financial account data

- receiving a categorized view instruction, wherein the categorized view instruction determines a data placement and format for the travel expense report

- formatting the data selection criteria in accordance with the metadata, wherein the metadata includes a location identifier corresponding to a plurality of disparate travel sources and protocol instructions for the plurality of disparate travel sources, and wherein the plurality of disparate travel sources comprise at least one of: a Customer Reservations System (CRS) and an air carrier which store the travel transaction data including travel cost data

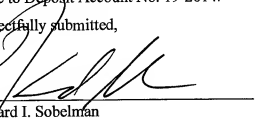
- formatting the data selection criteria in accordance with the metadata, wherein the metadata includes a location identifier corresponding to a plurality of disparate financial sources and protocol instructions for the plurality of disparate financial sources, and

wherein the plurality of disparate financial sources comprise financial account providers which store the financial transaction account data including financial charge data .

Dependent claims 2-5, 7-10, and 13-14 variously depend from independent claims 1 and 6. As such, dependent claims 2-5, 7-10, and 13-14 are allowable for at least the reasons set forth above, as well as in view of their own respective features.

In view of the above remarks and amendments, Applicants respectfully submit that all pending claims properly set forth that which Applicants regard as their invention and are allowable over the cited references. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request allowance of the pending claims. The Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the Examiner's convenience, if that would help further prosecution of the subject application. The Commissioner is authorized to charge any fees due to Deposit Account No. 19-2814.

Respectfully submitted,



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